



# Commission on Sustainable Development and Smart Growth

## Progress Report August 2012

To further the City of Binghamton's commitment to sustainable development and engage public participation, the Mayor and City Council convened the Commission on Sustainable Development and Smart Growth on April 3, 2008. In March of 2009, the Commission released its final report entitled, *Moving Toward Sustainability: An Opportunity for Growth and Prosperity*.<sup>1</sup> The 72-page report outlined a comprehensive approach to improving the City's economic, environmental, and social health over the long-term. Focus areas of the Commission included economic development, green building, land use, stormwater management, and climate protection. The recommendations developed by the Commission were guided by the below definition of sustainable development and set of smart growth principles:

*Sustainable development is that development which meets the needs of the present at the same time as safeguarding and improving economic, social and environmental resources and the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.*

### Smart Growth Principles

1. Mix land uses.
2. Take advantage of compact building design.
3. Provide for housing that meets the needs of a diversity of social and income groups.
4. Create walkable neighborhoods.
5. Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place.
6. Protect and preserve environmental quality and important natural and historic features of the area, including natural areas, water resources, air quality, farmland, scenic resources, and historic sites and districts.
7. Provide the public with access to formal and informal open spaces, including parks, playgrounds, community gardens, spaces for urban agriculture, water bodies, forests and hills.
8. Strengthen and direct development to currently developed areas to take advantage of existing community assets.
9. Enable choice in the mode of transportation available and insure that transportation options are integrated and consistent with land use objectives.
10. Make development decisions predictable, transparent, fair, and cost effective.
11. Accomplish goals and strategies for smart growth through coalitions with stakeholders and the public to ensure accountability.
12. Promote equity amongst all people and support ethnic and cultural diversity.
13. Support a diversity of viable business enterprises in downtowns, other neighborhood business districts, and the region, while promoting locally-owned businesses and disadvantaged business enterprises.
14. Encourage and strengthen regional cooperation.

"Smart growth is a better way to build and maintain our towns and cities. Smart growth means building urban, suburban and rural communities with housing and transportation choices near jobs, shops and schools. This approach supports local economies and protects the environment."

*-Smart Growth America*

<http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/what-is-smart-growth>

<sup>1</sup>The full report can be found at this link: <http://www.cityofbinghamton.com/Library/pages/Commissions/FINAL%20REPORT%20Commission%20on%20Sustainable%20Development%20and%20Smart%20Growth.pdf>



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## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



**Creating jobs in the Energy Efficiency Sector.** Partnered with community agencies to educate homeowners and increase demand for home energy improvements, which is not only creating local contracting jobs but is also saving residents money and making homes more comfortable.



**Supporting Innovative Financing for Commercial Energy Efficiency Improvements.** Served on the Southern Tier Regional Economic Development Council and helped secured \$1 million in funds which will help leverage up to \$100 million in private investment to make commercial properties in the Southern Tier more energy efficient.



**Expanding Markets for Local Farmers.** Continued to host the Downtown Farmers' Market and Brown Bag Concert Series. Brought the Ostiningo Farmers' Market to MetroCenter for the 2011-12 Winter season, making local food products available year round.



**Summer Youth Green Jobs Corp Program.** Launched grant program to support Youth Green Jobs training programs in 2011. Youth participated in programs during the past two years learning about urban food production and weatherization.

## SMART LAND USE



**Community Challenge Planning Grant.** Secured a \$486,058 grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to update the City's Comprehensive Plan, to overhaul the zoning code and design guidelines along the entire 1.7 mile Main Street-Court Street corridor featuring the first "form-based" zoning code in Broome County, and provide funding for programming around housing and homeownership, urban agriculture and green jobs, park beautification & safe streets.



**Building Regional Collaborations to Promote Livable Communities.** Helped found the Livable Communities Alliance, a collaborative created to provide leadership and education to preserve and enhance the quality of life in the Broome and Tioga Counties by promoting livable communities principles. Partnered to hold a 2011 Symposium with national, state, and local experts which was attended by over 120 people.



**Fostering active lifestyles through Complete streets policy and cost effective street enhancements.** Adopted a Complete Streets Policy and received an EPA Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities grant to assist with policy implementation. Partnered with Broome County Health Department to implement low cost intersection improvements and install bike 'sharrows'.



## STORMWATER MANAGEMENT



**Updated Zoning & Erosion chapters of code.** Conducted an evaluation of the City Code using the Center for Watershed Checklist and updated the City's Erosion Control Ordinance and Zoning Ordinance, which now require development projects to include green infrastructure techniques and enhanced landscaping. The updates will reduce the impact of flooding events, minimize the burden on our sewage treatment plant, improve water quality in the Susquehanna and Chenango rivers, limit the urban heat island effect, and make Binghamton a more attractive place to live.



**Porous Pavement Demonstration projects.** Installed several types of porous pavement at two City Parks (Kennedy Park and the South Side Commons) and supported installation of porous asphalt in parking lot of 85 Liberty St, owned by Opportunities for Broome.



**Stormwater management plan.** Developed and began implementing the City's first stormwater management plan, which will help the City better manage the impact of stormwater on waters bodies from new and existing development.

## CLIMATE PROTECTION



**Greenhouse Gas Inventory and Energy & Climate Action Plan.** Completed a baseline greenhouse gas inventory and adopted the City's first Energy & Climate Action Plan with a target to reduce emissions 25% by 2025 from 2006 levels. Plan touted by NYS Department of Environmental Conservation as a model for other communities.

## SUSTAINABLE BUILDING



**Preserving Historic Buildings.** Developed design guidelines for Historic Properties, updated enabling legislation for the Commission on Architecture and Urban Design (CAUD), improved application process for and worked with Broome County GIS to include information regarding historic props in online real property database.



**Reducing Construction & Demolition Waste.** Sponsored a workshop on deconstruction, which was attended by over 40 people including contractors, homeowners, historic preservation advocates, architects and more. Deconstructed three residential buildings the City's Restore NY grant.